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Habitat's Scenographic Imagination

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Summary

Habitat, the furniture and household goods retail chain, has been characterised as evidencing an 'eclectic' approach towards design styles and promoting a 'lifestyle' attitude towards domestic interiors. In an attempt to fill-out these two terms and to explore the elusive (and allusive) content of Habitat's 'eclectic lifestyle' this article analyses the domestic scenography that is presented in three arenas of display that can be seen as being authored by Habitat: the shops themselves; the annual catalogues; and the advice books that were published under the authorship of Terence Conran and promoted and sold by Habitat (but also available more widely). I suggest that one way of recognising the affective content of Habitat's scenographic imagination is to grasp it as constituting a genre that incorporates variety yet also mobilises a particular set of domestic promises.

Keywords: Habitat, Terence Conran, Lifestyle, Genre, Scenography, Display.

The furnishings and household goods store, Habitat, emerged in the mid-1960s in London and quickly expanded, leading to fifty stores spread across the United Kingdom by the mid-1980s. (There were also stores in Belgium, France, Japan and the United States [under the name 'Conran's'], but here I am primarily concerned with the UK.) Design historians are agreed on two central characteristics that seem to define Habitat: eclecticism and 'lifestyle'. For instance, Cheryl Buckley writes: 'Eclecticism and plurality became a feature of design in Britain from the mid- to late 1960s, and an excellent example of this was the furniture and home equipment store Habitat, which promoted design as a "lifestyle" choice.'¹ Habitat, rather than offering innovation in design or in retailing, is seen as responding to a general tendency alive in culture and consolidating a specific response to it. Thus Penny Sparke writes 'by the early 1960s it was clear that a mass market for lifestyle retailing and journalism had emerged, and the furniture and textile designer Terence Conran, who opened his first Habitat store in London's Fulham Road in 1964, was quick to exploit the fact', and she goes on to claim that 'the key message that Conran communicated to his customers was that, as the interior decorators already knew well, it was possible to mix old furniture pieces with new items'.²

The characterisation of Habitat as combining eclecticism and 'lifestyle' suggests that two historical shifts were being registered by the successful growth of this retail chain. The first of these could be seen as a loosening of both traditional and modern design commitments: you are no longer required to choose your cultural allegiances, now you can be promiscuous in your aesthetic and cultural choices. In the world of Habitat this was most usually represented as a simple juxtaposition: a Chesterfield sofa ('a traditional sofa of superb quality made the old-fashioned way with craftsmanship and skill') and a Wassily chair ('the classic chair designed in 1926 by Marcel Breuer and named after his fellow student [*sic*] at the Bauhaus institute, the painter Wassily Kandinsky').³ The second shift could be seen as a development of capitalism, whereby the commodity form is seen to successfully colonise everyday life in its entirety in the form of a lifestyle

culture that brings together leisure, belief, design, fashion, and everyday habits into saleable forms (or quasi-saleable forms).⁴ In this 'logic' aesthetic preferences (modernist rationalism, say), material practices (sleeping, washing, and so on), ethical commitments (vegetarianism, for instance), and spiritual beliefs (such as yoga), follow the energies of the world of fashion rather than existing as part of an embedded life-world.

But if eclecticism tells us about values that Habitat has abandoned or simply not adopted (a belief in a unified design principle) it strikes me as less clear what values and meanings were being conveyed by the particular ensembles and constellations that Habitat promoted. Similarly, if 'lifestyle' suggests that lives were being fashioned through commodity choices, it begs the question of whether the styles on offer through Habitat could cohere into an imaginable and realisable 'life'. We might also want to note that these two terms (eclecticism and lifestyle) seem to pull in different directions: eclecticism pulling towards plurality and heterogeneity; lifestyle towards something singular and coherent (even if 'shop bought').

The purpose of this essay is to add content to what might be construed as fundamentally processual terms (eclecticism and lifestyle); its aim is to fill out the sensual particularities of Habitat as a taste formation. To do this I am going to look specifically at three sites or platforms where the Habitat aesthetic was most clearly on display: the shop interiors; the Habitat annual catalogues; and Habitat advice literature most vividly seen in Terence Conran's *The House Book*. All three platforms together present thousands and thousands of examples of interior designs, of rooms fashioned with furniture, flooring, wall decorations, and domestic objects. Some of these images include people, but these are in a significant minority. I am going to attend to these images as 'scenographic' (rather than as simply visual) partly because I am interested in the suggested drama, in the moods and in the narratives that might be unfolding in such images, and partly because I don't want to be limited in thinking of Habitat's imagination as purely visual (a central element of the Habitat world-view was the social importance of food and cooking).⁵ To this end I want to suggest that design history could usefully redeploy a term more usually found in literary studies and film studies: genre.

Genre and Taste Formations

In Grace Lees-Maffei's 2009 review of the state of design history, she identifies what she terms 'The Production-Consumption-Mediation Paradigm'.⁶ In her essay she champions the developing 'focus on mediation' within design history, which offers 'design historians a third stream which brings together issues of production and consumption', and which, in its sophisticated versions, avoids 'a binary distinction between the material and the social, between the object and surrounding mediating channels'.⁷ In this context my focus on the display of Habitat's merchandise in shops and catalogues, along with my concern with the design literature that circulated alongside it, is clearly a contribution to the study of design mediation and one that is sensitive to the way that mediation negotiates elements of production and consumption. Here I want to suggest that the term 'genre' is a particularly useful and flexible term for grasping and analysing types of design mediation and their attendant assemblages of objects and practices.

While the term genre has routinely been associated with narrative forms (with films, novels and so on) and musical idioms (rock, dance, and so forth) there is no reason why it cannot be applied to other phenomena, indeed the very term is taken from the natural

sciences (its etymological root is the Latin term *genus*). While 'genre' is sometimes used as synonymous with 'style' it has a much greater flexibility than that term, as well as being more socially oriented, and is often productively used to categorise materials that share a 'family resemblance' rather than a consistent morphological character (which is often essential for recognising a style).⁸ The narrative film genre 'Film Noir', for instance, was initially used to denote a particular expressionistic style of film lighting, but has gone on to name all sorts of narrative cycles which clearly don't make use of this style.⁹ In the world of material culture and design we could say that 'retro' represents a genre rather than a style (even though in certain instances it may well be dominated by a particular style, for instance 'art nouveau').¹⁰ In this sense a 'social contract' underwrites a genre much more convincingly than a morphological analysis: for instance, in my mother's kitchen you will find examples of 1960s Midwinter tableware (tableware that she rarely uses today) that in a different kitchen might signal 'retro' or 'kitsch'. It would be the whole environment – the scenographic arena – that would tell you whether something was 'retro' rather than old.

Genre, then, works by generating cues that frame our commerce with things, establishing the moods and atmospheres within which disparate or similar items assemble and generate particular affects and social promises. Following Derrida, we could say that in design culture material objects 'participate' in a genre rather than belong in one: for instance, to return to the topic of 'eclecticism' it would be foolhardy to imagine that any object (let alone Marcel Breuer's Wassily chair) could *belong* to eclecticism, though it is clear that within the realm of Habitat it was made to participate in that 'genre'.¹¹ The question this might pose, then, is: do genres name only those aspects of material design that are purposefully composed of a range of styles ('retro', 'eclecticism' etc.) or could we say that 'genre' names the sociality of styles, that it names a style or an assemblage of styles as it or they participate in social life?

The separation of genre and style is primarily a heuristic device aimed at encouraging the exploration of the social content of aesthetic materials. Most of the time the same effect *could* be achieved by treating 'style' as a historical way of seeing and perceiving the world. In the 1950s Raymond Williams began the work of treating cultural 'conventions' (and for him all cultural forms were conventions that were either established or were trying to become established) as articulating 'structures of feeling'.¹² In many respects 'style', 'genre', and 'convention' are cognate terms used by cultural analysts in various overlapping ways: the point, to my mind, is not to produce restrictive definitions of such terms but to mobilise them for the task of achieving historically rich accounts of social worlds built simultaneously out of concrete things and thoughts and feelings. In the case of Habitat, we are faced with a cultural world that would be difficult to apprehend under the heading 'style' (it is simply too diverse). As a genre, though, we are also able to treat it as an ensemble of styles, some of which appear purposefully contradictory, and we are also able to treat it as a cultural form that isn't simply contained by the retail company Habitat. Habitat as a genre is a 'taste formation' that promotes forms of improvised sociability as well as interior decoration and furnishings.¹³ Some of this is achieved by the pedagogic strategies of the shop and the catalogues, but as with all successful genres, the world that is invoked exceeds the local arrangements designed to promote it. In the case of Habitat this was achieved most forcefully by a publication that wasn't a 'Habitat product' in any strict sense but was distributed by the company and was featured in its catalogues: Terence Conran's *The House Book*.¹⁴ But the flexibility of a Habitat as a genre is also a problem: where do we situate its contours? What do we include and

exclude? Should the Conran shop be included because it offered a more ‘up-market’ version of this genre? Given that a characteristic of the genre was that it could be inhabited in a number of ways (through the ‘basic range’ for instance, as well as through acquiring more exclusive items) shouldn’t the Conran shop be a significant element in mapping this expanded taste formation? These questions can’t be settled once and for all and my attempt at establishing ‘Habitat’ as a genre will need to be judged by its productivity in naming a socially relevant phenomena of domestic design. My approach has been to stay as close as possible to material that had an existential link to the specific retail company while recognising that the taste formation was a much broader and amorphous proposition.

In this light one of the most useful approaches to genre is offered by Lauren Berlant who describes a genre as ‘an aesthetic structure of affective expectation’ and as a ‘formation that absorbs all kinds of small variations or modifications while promising that the person transacting with it will experience the pleasure of encountering what they expected.’¹⁵ For Berlant, then, the consistency of ‘genre’ is found not in the materials details of cultural products but in the affective promises that are on offer: genre is ‘a form of aesthetic expectation with porous boundaries allowing complex audience identifications.’¹⁶ Habitat as a taste formation fits this definition precisely: it was porous in its contours and could solicit diverse identifications from an emergent ‘new middle-class’ (from the socially radical to the politically conservative) as well as from the youthful energies of more traditional class formations. But it was also consistent in its affective promise. To recognise Habitat as a genre requires recognising the labour of mediation in the production of Habitat as a bundle of diverse environments but with a shared affective expectation of ‘the good life’ rendered as improvised, informal, and domestic. This is also to recognise that the world of ‘Habitat’ (as a genre, as a taste formation) trades in commodities (including upcycled and recycled ones), and that commodities, in the Marxist understanding at least, are magical things that always promise more than they can deliver. The labour of mediation that I attend to is distributed across three scenographic platforms: shops, catalogues, and advice literature.

Shops

The first scenographic site for Habitat is the shop itself. The very first Habitat shop opened on May 11, 1964 in Fulham Road, London, and established a paradigmatic form that was adopted and adapted by subsequent outlets. The shop fitting (undertaken Oliver Gregory and Terence Conran) followed basic ‘brutalist’ principles: bare or whitewashed brick walls; quarry tile floors in some areas, sisal or coir flooring in others; false ceilings with spotlights creating dramatic chiaroscuro throughout. But if the background to the shop emphasised ‘natural’ or ‘raw’ materials (and in this sense coir matting could function in the same way as untreated concrete) it was the dynamic orchestration of the shop as a whole that became Habitat’s signature style.

Like most of the subsequent Habitat shops, the Fulham Road store was spread across two floors. The exterior of the shop presented a series of very large plate glass windows, with a huge pivoting door as an entrance. Customers entered at ground level, on the floor where the furniture was displayed (as well as providing an area for cutting and buying textiles) and could then descend to the basement where the kitchenware was displayed. The journalistic commentary, at the time of the shop’s opening, offers a good sense of how the space worked:

The impression on first going through the huge, light wood door is very pleasant. Grey haircord carpeting and buff tiles on the floor, untreated blueish-grey bricks or pine panelling or rough textured white plaster on the walls, and a herringbone ceiling of white-painted wooden slats. This provides a restful, neutral background for the simple furniture spiked with splashes of brilliant colour...¹⁷

But if the ground floor was generally 'restful' then the basement offered a different energy altogether:

Downstairs is a real treasure cave of kitchenware; stacks and stacks of pottery, from the familiar blue of the Spode Italian pattern to Wedgwood in black and white, Scandinavian designs, and French café coffee pots; casseroles of every shape and size and purpose; lots of simple glasses; and masses of tempting things from butchers' aprons and blocks, storage jars, rush turkey bags, pine wood salt boxes, and porcelain pastry tureens down to sets of birch spoons and wooden skewers.¹⁸

The descriptive language emphasises the differences: 'restful, neutral' on the ground floor, 'stacks and stacks' and 'masses' in the basement. Even the word 'spiked' offers a sense of subdued serenity that might be punctured, momentarily, by a bright shard of colour.

The Fulham Road store (and all subsequent stores) provides a contrapuntal orchestration of different energies. On the ground floor there would be open space with small clusters of individual items: downstairs items crowded together in a melange of things. The photographs of the various shops (taken as a record of their opening) show how this orchestration was rolled-out as more and more outlets were opened. In some shops the kitchen department was located on an upper floor: what mattered was that the customer entered into the 'serene' space of furnishing and then subsequently came across the hustle and bustle of kitchenware.

To take one example: the Kingston-upon-Thames store was the fourth shop to open (it opened in 1967, the same year as the Manchester Habitat) and we can see the contrapuntal orchestrations in the scenographic layout across multiple floors (the key distinction being between the basement and the other floors). Figure 1 shows a display of furniture. The scene consists of a background of whitewashed bare-brick walls with neutral carpeting ('almond sisal').¹⁹ A climbing plant is located by a protruding corner. A small cluster of furniture gathers: a Chesterfield sofa with a matching 'curtain' covering the wall; three cane chairs; a Magistretti coffee table. It is a loose arrangement, an improvised sociability of seating scattered informally around a table. It is sparse and uncluttered. Downstairs (figure 2) the display principles follow an aesthetics that suits the mass produced. Order is created with divided shelving containing profusions of omelette pans, garlic presses, mugs, cutlery, and so on. The space emphasises the prodigious quantity of things. But profusion is never chaos: care is shown in the regimented arrangements of pots and pans stacked with their handles all pointing in the same direction; over-abundant 'dump' displays of basketware are carefully arranged; textiles are placed as a cascade of materials; and so on.²⁰

The contrapuntal energies of the floors didn't work as a form of dissonance, but instead established a dynamic rhythm that combined different display modes (and moods) to create something that commentators understood as characteristic of the new shops:

In the store's airy, grey-carpeted interior, simple bentwood and cane chairs, flank deep, plushy sofas: sturdy dining tables in scrubbed natural pine are set with enamel mugs, a bright red coffee pot; bolts of fabric sit easy to see and to feel, on shallow pine-plank shelves. And all the time music swirls softly from an unseen gramophone. The atmosphere is at once both gay and restful – and somehow faintly seductive.²¹

This 'atmosphere [that] is at once both gay and restful – and somehow faintly seductive' gets to the heart of Habitat's display aesthetics. 'Atmosphere' is an important word here and, as can be seen from the quotation above, it wasn't just the result of visual techniques; it also resulted from the choice of music ('cool jazz') and from the smells emanating from the kitchen department generated by packets of 'Provençal herbs, pungent and aromatic' which seemed to complement the 'pastoral flowery mugs in soft browns and blues, enamelware in innumerable colours.'²² Habitat offered an intense sensorial world of smells, sounds, and the 'gay and restful' visual displays were presided over by a primarily female staff who, at least in the early days of the Fulham Road store, 'had Vidal Sassoon haircuts, Mary Quant outfits and butchers' aprons. Freshly cut flowers were everywhere and a sense of style pervaded every aspect of the place.'²³ The 'seductive' quality, noticed by female journalists, animated the overarching scene of people and things, and offered an image of femininity both eroticised and domesticated (swinging sixties garb overlaid with butchers' apron).

The contrapuntal orchestration of different floors evokes certain images of domestic life: on the ground floor there is the calm of an uncluttered, white-walled modern (and clearly modernist) living room; in the basement a more homely and cluttered, countrified kitchen. But these are inferences suggested more by the actual items on display (the wooden spoons and kitchen blocks) than by the scenographic layout as a whole. In the end the real scenographic referent of these layouts isn't domestic space (or such reference is only by inference), but other retail spaces. Present-day IKEA stores offer fully realised tableaux of specific rooms (a child's bedroom, a home office, and so on) and this can make looking back on the scenography of Habitat stores in the 1970s and 80s seem under-realised in comparison.²⁴ Habitat's mimetic faculty, though, was (at the level of shop fitting) directed at diverse set of retail and commercial spaces. As one commentator realised, Habitat shops refused 'the cold conservative "good taste" that Heals, and modern areas of several other stores have consistently had for so long. It has the exuberance and magic of the basement of the Bazaar de l'Hotel de Ville in Paris and the excitement of street markets and Christmas presents.'²⁵ As Barry Curtis explains, the 'Habitat shop combined the informality of the boutique with abundance of a warehouse.'²⁶ And it wasn't just any warehouse but the particular French ironmongers that Conran and Michael Wickham had found in 1953 at the start of Conran's life-long love affair with French culture: 'We said the way to run a shop is like those wonderful ironmongers you get in France, which have masses of things piled up everywhere. They gave a feeling of confidence and plenitude. Terence and I were beguiled by them'.²⁷

In effect what Habitat's 'stagecraft' performed was an exaggeration and a condensation of the scenographic rhetoric of the late nineteenth-century department store. The classic

department store emerged out of the enlargement of haberdashery shops and introduced a range of new retail technologies (such as fixed and labelled pricing, open displays, 'window shopping', and so on).²⁸ The department store was animated by two seemingly contradictory motives: to present exclusive and expensive commodities, and to present cheap and abundant commodities. This might mean stacking bargains at the entrance to the shop, to lure customers in with the promise of unprecedented value for money, but it also might mean displaying a commodity as a unique and unaffordable object in a window display or in the sort of 'spectacular-secular-sacred' displays that are common to museums, art galleries, and exclusive shops. In this way the department store combined a rationalised version of the bazaar and the market stall with the museum and the art gallery.²⁹ But the department store classically catered for all kinds of taste (from different periods, from different parts of the world): what Habitat provided was a *homogenised eclecticism*, where all the varied objects (wooden spoons and Le Corbusier chairs, pasta jars and Chesterfield sofas) cohabit as a harmonious assemblage, that can be accessed in part or in whole.

Catalogues

Just as each new store opening became an event to be discussed in broadsheet newspapers and colour supplements, so too, did the release of the annual Habitat catalogue. Thus in February 1973 *The Times* could announce that 'this week saw one of the eagerly anticipated events in the British furnishing calendar [*sic*] – the appearance of the new Habitat catalogue' and would go on to describe its contents: 'this year it contains – quite apart from the equivalent of a magazine full of merchandise and furnishing ideas – an eight-page, illustrated stitch-by-stitch guide to making home furnishings: blinds, curtains, loose covers, bed covers'.³⁰ The annual Habitat catalogue was a mixture of interior scenes featuring Habitat furnishings, photographs of individual items, examples of textiles and wallpapers, and various 'advice' sections. These advice sections were often 'how-to' guides (for instance 'a guide to baking bread', 'making good coffee', 'the art of tempura', 'how best to use your lighting', and so on) but could also include articles like 'A Look Back at the Bauhaus'.³¹ The 'how-to' guides tended to mix the promotion of Habitat items with more general information.

If the annual catalogue was an institution by 1973 (part of the British furnishing calendar), then it had achieved this status fairly quickly because the 1973 catalogue was only the third catalogue produced in the classic annual format. When Habitat was first launched the inaugural catalogue was a single foldout broadsheet of thick matt paper that listed only a small sample of what the store sold. More crucially, though, it presented these items as simple line illustrations with punning 'folksy' descriptions for each item. Thus a faux-naïve drawing of a pepper mill by Juliet Glynn-Smith was accompanied by the caption (by Caroline Conran) 'what a grind pepper mills from France', and a drawing of a tray was captioned 'get carried away with beech and white fiberglass trays'.³² This deliberately quirky style of promotion located Habitat as part of a boutique culture ('we see ourselves as the Mary Quant of the furnishing world'³³). By the early 1970s Habitat could no longer claim boutique status and was more obviously associated with high street chain stores and supermarkets (in December 1970 *The Guardian* could rhetorically propose that Habitat was 'The Marks and Sparks of instant furniture?').³⁴

The emergence of the 'classic' Habitat catalogue, as it came to be known in its mature form in the early 1970s required two decisive factors: one of these was the growth of the

mail order side of Habitat (*Habitat by Post*); and the other was the short-lived merger of Habitat with the high street stationary chain Rymans. What this facilitated was a much more decisive merger, by which the furniture makers Lupton Morton were incorporated into Habitat. Lupton Morton not only made exceedingly cheap ‘flat-pack’ furniture (Lupton Morton’s Campus range of seating would become a bestseller for Habitat) they had also developed a sophisticated catalogue that promoted particular ensembles of tables and seating with a flavour of the kind of life that such furniture might participate in. It was the Lupton Morton catalogue *Creative Living* that established the paradigm that Habitat would take over wholesale: the first full-colour, photographic mail order catalogue for Habitat would be called *Habitat by Post: Creative Living*.

The Habitat catalogue appeared annually from 1971 until 2011, when the UK based side of the brand went into administration.³⁵ Across the decades the catalogues witnessed changing fashions in both home-furnishings and in the way Habitat promoted itself. As historical documents, then, they chart the comings and goings (the durability or not) of household fashions (the longevity of wooden spoons, for instance, and the much briefer life of smoked glass coffee tables), as well as charting the market positioning of Habitat. It is, for instance, noticeable that as IKEA begins to dominate the household goods market in the UK (by the early 1990s), Habitat reconfigures itself as a ‘designer-led’ high fashion shop and it does this by redesigning the catalogue. By the end of the 1990s the Habitat catalogue looks more like a design magazine than the classic catalogues of the 1970s and 80s: gone are the glossy pages and the photographs brimming with goods that could be purchased at the stores; in its place, are matt pages of studied ‘coolness’, where the images themselves are stylish, often with a shallow depth-of-field that emphasises, for instance, the gloss of an old wooden floor rather than the commodities being sold.

Here, though, I’m primarily concerned with the catalogues from the 1970s and 80s. This was the period when Habitat had its strongest presence within domestic retailing in the UK and when the catalogue held its biggest cultural importance. As soon as the catalogue achieved its mature form in 1971 (with full colour photography, tableaux of domestic interiors, domestic advice sections, and miscellaneous photographs of household items) it was being promoted as something more than a catalogue of retail items. Thus with the launch of the second annual catalogue in 1972, Habitat announces: ‘Last year we gave away nearly 800,000 Habitat catalogues. They’ve become well-thumbed, worn-out collector’s items, used over and over again as a definitive guide to home furnishings.’³⁶ By 1981, by which time the catalogue has to be purchased, Habitat are selling 1,125,000 catalogues annually and it is clear to Habitat that ‘the catalogues are also bought as a glossy interior design magazine providing new ideas.’³⁷ In this sense the catalogue comes to be seen as a ‘lifestyle guide’: a resource for domestic self-fashioning, for learning how to live the life being promoted by Habitat. It is therefore a key site for finding the contours of that life. Here I just want to concentrate on the scenography of the catalogue and how it continues and develops the scenography that was established by the shop. Due to the limitations of space I will limit myself to pointing to a small number of characteristic features.

As a scenographic practice it is worth starting out by looking at the catalogue’s ‘realism’ (recognising this as a relativist term). If the catalogues from the late 1990s trade in an image of naturalistic sociability (with young adults in informal settings drinking and laughing) the images from the 1970s and 80s rarely try to simulate the ‘liveness’ of an event, or the details of ‘lived-in-ness’ of a room. The images are divided between those

that are clearly photographed on a set (the majority) and those that are using actual domestic spaces where there are windows looking out onto an identifiable world (and where this is the case they fall in equal measure between rural and urban settings, though the urban settings often include a park or a garden as the view through the window). But even where an actual domestic room is being used there is little attempt to try and convince the viewer that actuality is being glimpsed. Figure 3, for instance, from the 1975 catalogue features the iconic Scoop chairs upholstered in what Habitat called 'Groovy' (a form of heavy corduroy). The scene has small domestic details (house plants, for instance) and we can glimpse the back of a householder on a balcony. But the room appears staged, 'dressed', and generally empty of signs of life. There is, however, a small 'reality effect': the two mugs on the Magistretti table.³⁸ Within the generally empty spaces of the catalogue tableaux, reality effects offer an 'absent presence', a sense of a social scene that has momentarily left the stage. Such effects include, half empty glasses, lit fires and candles, open magazines and books, and so on. The scene has been set, the players have left, and now you, the viewer, can enter.

Looking through the catalogues the images *feel* more 'populated' than they actually are. In the 1975 catalogue only ten percent of the pages have people on them (and the percentage of peopled images is actually far less, as many pages have multiple images on them). And this percentage is maintained across the catalogues. When people do appear they usually appear one at a time. For instance in the 1975 catalogue there is a picture of a middle-aged man smoking a pipe and stroking a dog; a young woman putting together a sofa bed; a young woman demonstrating how the duvet can result in the 'ten second bed'; a young bearded man working at a drawing board; and so on. This doesn't mean, however, that the catalogue is addressed to singletons, far from it; it means that the images in the catalogues are often of unfinished 'family' units. Habitat's first address was to 'young marrieds', and by the mid-1970s this had expanded to include all sorts of households including families at various stages, as well as students and singletons. But the singleton is always seen as transitional, on their way to becoming part of a couple, and then part of a larger family group. In this way even those images that include people seem to also have the absent presence of other people, of partners and children who have 'just walked off' but could be back soon. Where there is more than one person it is usually the couple (there are hardly any 'full' family units; where there are children and adults together it is usually children and a 'mother' figure). In the 1975 catalogue, for instance, a page is devoted to high-modernist chairs (including the Wassily chair). The chairs are occupied by three couples: an elderly formally dressed white couple; a young smartly dressed black couple; and a young informally dressed white couple. In the heteronormativity of 1975 showing young and old together, with couples of different ethnic heritages, was the equivalent of saying 'all are welcome here'.

The catalogue had a quasi-narrative direction: its tableaux began in 'sitting rooms' and 'living rooms' and moved through the house, to dining rooms, to bedrooms and bathrooms, and ended up in the kitchen. For the most part the tableau of the domestic room was standard, but for some items (lighting for instance and tableware) the decontextualized picture of a single commodity was also used. A connection is maintained to the orchestrated energies of the shop by the way that 'profusion' increases as you get nearer to the end of the catalogue, and the images become more like the layout of a shop than anything that you would expect to find in a domestic setting (for instance, figure 4). Both the shop itself and the catalogue articulate a range of design ideas that encourage both uncluttered 'serene' interior spaces (in the more 'formal' rooms in the

house) as well as much more clamorous spaces of improvised and ‘work-a-day’ sociality (the kitchen primarily). This domestic formalism (and associated pedagogy) found its ultimate exemplification in *The House Book*.

Advice

Terence Conran’s *The House Book* began life as a training solution for Habitat floor staff who had little experience in interior design and in suggesting ways that customers might achieve the Habitat ‘look’. It turned into a vast publication that spawned a raft of other publications.³⁹ In many respects *The House Book* consolidated the kinds of pedagogic design work that was beginning to be accomplished by Habitat shops (and by their more up-market spin offs, such as the UK Conran shops) and by the catalogues. It carried with it a vast ambition:

The House Book is for everyone who would like to make the most of where they live. There are over 1000 beautiful colour pictures to give you ideas, backed with solid facts and diagrams so you can put them into practice: it could save you pounds. It is such a compendium of information and ideas that anybody setting up house should have one.⁴⁰

It was for everybody and anybody.

The House Book covers all areas of interior decoration and design, as well as supplying information about house buying, mortgages, DIY, loft conversions and so on. It is a huge volume and I can only scratch the surface of it here. In scenographic terms it continues the work of the catalogues by supplying tableaux, but this time all of them are ‘actuality scenes’ (albeit ones that have been thoroughly manicured for their photographic performance). The book sets out to both promote diversity of styles and suggest that the reader should think of interior design style within six modes: Farmhouse; Town-house; Country-house; Mediterranean; International; and Eclectic. The book in general seems to mostly supply images that strive for a mix of Farmhouse, Town-house, Mediterranean and Eclectic. Indeed within each style there is a loose attitude that strives for an anti-dogmatic mixing of elements. This general anti-dogmatic encouragement of ‘soft-eclecticism’ is at odds with the way that ‘eclecticism’ (or a ‘strong-eclecticism’) is set up as the most taxing of styles, one that requires something like design ‘genius’:

This style [eclecticism] is highly personal, and the mark of people who are supremely confident of their own taste. They may be, and usually are, associated in some way with the arts, and it is they who are the creative innovators, discovering, as it were, the styles that in a short space of time are imitated, simplified and absorbed into styles that will be generally accepted.⁴¹

In many ways this can be read to flatter the diligent student of Habitat’s scenographic imagination. Anyone who has paid attention to the catalogues and the shops would understand by now the general ‘soft’ eclecticism on offer: they may not be able to afford either a Chesterfield or a Wassily chair (let alone afford to pair them), but they would know that the simplified modernist seating supplied by Habitat’s ‘basic range’ could fit with an old Victorian birdcage from the local junk shop.

In *The House Book* there are two ‘eclecticisms’ on offer. There is high-eclecticism (mixing ‘Rietveldt chairs and panelled tallboy’) that is taken as the driver for cutting-edge interior design (blending Bauhaus, pop, and *art nouveau*), and the soft eclecticism which is the insistent task of both Habitat and *The House Book* to promote. This soft eclecticism is not simply about combining notable styles, it is also about inhabiting a range of housing stock (from Georgian Town-houses to high-rise blocks) with a scenography that consistently mixes ‘country kitchen’ and ‘uncluttered informality’. Commenting on a picture of a ‘farmhouse kitchen’ *The House Book* tells us ‘this kitchen could be equally at home in a cottage or a modern tower block of flats’.⁴² Here eclecticism names an attitude that allows the interior to bare little or no relation with the exterior: it is an aesthetic that is literally cut off from its environmental reality (of town or country, high-rise or cottage). This was the heart of the Habitat project.⁴³ It was a soft-eclecticism that was recognised as central to Habitat and central to Conran, not just as a designer but as someone who was spearheading a drive for middleclass suburbanites to gentrify rundown inner-cities:⁴⁴

The furnishing format is deceptively simple. The rules are essentially commonplace and quite safe. First, degut your house regardless of its architectural style – although obviously, good architecture counts when exposing the structural shell. Then mix old and new, junk shop finds with modern design (Conran’s, of course) and set it off against white paint, natural floors and existing proportions. Don’t obscure window frames with curtains, or clutter walls with hefty cupboards.⁴⁵

The degutting was often of run-down housing in working class enclaves. Here ‘soft eclecticism’ wasn’t a stylistic belief, but a pragmatic necessity: the Victorian terraced house and the Edwardian semi was never going to accommodate dogmatically modern styles. But eclecticism also articulated a social energy, precisely because it was the antithesis of dogmatism. Soft eclecticism was the aesthetic form that a new ‘social informality’ was taking in the domestic realm as well as more broadly.⁴⁶ Here the best guide to how domestic ‘informality’ might be made manifest is in the pages of *The House Book* that are dedicated to Terence Conran’s own home.

The Conran’s home shows us ‘soft eclecticism’ as a social form. Figure five, for instance, shows us the Conrans’ kitchen and is captioned with the following information: ‘In the Conrans’ basement kitchen, a long narrow table seats eight and (a very important point) this still allows room for comfortable circulation, even when all the chairs are occupied’.⁴⁷ The signs of social informality are everywhere: from the supine cat stretched over modern work surfaces to the vast Welsh dresser at the back; from the mismatched chairs to the overflowing bowl of buns in the foreground. This is the Habitat scenographic imagination at its most vivid and it is, ironically perhaps, empty of anything that could be acquired from Habitat. It is the result of acquired learning, rather than simply acquired commodities. In this kitchen it looks as if the occupants have momentarily left the room, and forgotten to push their chairs in. Soft eclecticism becomes the name for a domestic and informal conviviality.

If convivial sociability is the absent presence of figure 5, we can see it actualised in figure 6, albeit in a more formal setting. The contrapuntal energies of the Habitat shops are reflected in the different scenographic atmospheres of the two rooms. In the kitchen a mild rambunctious ambience is suggested by the eight dinner guests who have just left; in the ‘living-room’ a different mood pervades: ‘The living room has to be both private

place for being peaceful in, and public platform where you can sparkle when you are, as it were, at home to the world. It must be a place where you can relax, and it must, moreover enable you to recharge your energies.’⁴⁸ In figure 6 we are shown Conran at home with his happy family, with Caroline Conran perched on a table, with a Richard Smith ‘artwork’ on the chimney breast (an artwork that is a hybrid of abstract art and soft furnishing) and various *bric-à-brac* that can also be seen in Habitat catalogues (the antique telescope, for instance). The photograph of figure six is captioned: ‘Comfort, controlled casualness, flexibility and prettiness; the Conrans’ living-room scores high on all the important points without being over-designed.’⁴⁹ ‘Controlled casualness’ is, perhaps, the designation that comes closest to naming the social form of soft-eclecticism; it is a contradictory and ambiguous form, a suggestion of ‘studied informality’ and ‘rehearsed improvisations’. It is something learnt in a way that hides its learning.

Conclusion: Design, Mediation, Genre

In this article I have focused on what are clearly platforms of mediation within the world of design.⁵⁰ In the recent sociology of culture, ‘mediation’ has taken on a new force. For the French sociologist, Antoine Hennion, there have been approaches to mediation that have focused on ‘discourse’ and social interpretation at the expense of any actual commerce with objects and their sensual particularity.⁵¹ But, as Hennion goes on to demonstrate, this is not the only choice for researchers interested in forms of mediation. Indeed, a focus on forms of mediation (and Hennion’s examples in the world of music include arguments about the correct instrumentation for playing Baroque music and the experience of a rock concert) can offer a vividly materialist approach that can be attentive to the sensual particularity of objects. If we start from the premise that there is no pure, unmediated commerce with an object then to fulsomely address mediation is to insist on the specificity of context. To put this slightly differently: there is no *a priori* reason why an encounter with a Magistretti table in a retail catalogue is more or less productive than an encounter with a Magistretti table in somebody’s house or in a museum of design. There are, however, particular productivities that can be claimed for particular contexts and forms of mediation.

I want to make a claim for this constellation of mediations (shop, catalogue, advice) as a socially and historically rich set of sensual and affective inundations for the objects and interiors displayed. These mediations constitute the public realm for the objects gathered together and they establish the social energy of these objects. Here, in catalogues and advice literature, on shelves and shop floors, the wooden spoons, the in-store jazz music, Scoop chairs, and Provencal herbs and recipes that deploy them, circulate together entangling each other in atmospheres and moods. The thick green ‘Groovy’ corduroy of a Scoop chair is embroiled in a world of prepared improvisations that could suggest an impromptu meal with friends, or a quiet night in. The ‘actual’ life that any single Scoop chair may face may be quite different from this, of course, but mediations aren’t so easily dispensed with. Its subsequent life may or may not realise the sensual promises that were stitched into its Groovy fabric, both literally and via the inundations of association that are fashioned in the particular public mediations that are the topic of this article.

Habitat emerged within a retail environment that was being transformed by the energies of a boutique culture that was challenging the behemoths of department stores. In this context Habitat in its early years shared some similarities with shops such as Biba: both shops echoed Barbara Hulanicki’s sentiment that ‘we [Biba] were not going to be another

“Can I help you, madam?” shop. I wanted the customers to feel at home, not hounded by sales assistants’.⁵² On the one hand this move towards informality in the clothing and furnishing retail trade marks a more casual relationship between buyers and sellers; on the other it follows the logic of self-service as it was being rolled-out in supermarkets in Britain in the 1950s and 60s.⁵³ Both Biba and Habitat (in their very different ways) deployed a scenographic imagination that offered lessons in design that were embedded in the very materiality of their shops: quarry tiles and coir matting in Habitat; 1920s detailing and decorative ostrich feathers at Biba. Yet Habitat outlived Biba and became a chain store in a way that Biba never achieved. Habitat’s main retailing achievement in the UK was to inflect domestic goods and furnishings with the same fashion-energy that had previously been reserved for clothing. You can see the broad influence of this approach in the way that a shop like John Lewis in the early 1970s started to display furniture ‘scenographically’ (within domestic tableaux) and as something glamorous rather than as articulating values of longevity, craftsmanship, and exclusive taste.⁵⁴

What I think made the Habitat taste formation so successful and so widely circulated was the broad appeal of the scenographic platforms that I have been analysing. On one level they offered a diverse ensemble of attractions: shop floors selling pristine items; catalogues embedding merchandise within ‘sets’; advice literature offering glimpses of complete and living interior worlds. Yet for all this diversity there is a consistency in each platform’s mode of address. Throughout my analysis I have been finding a range of orchestrations that run from what could be described as ‘condensed orchestrations’ (the ground floor furniture displays in the shops; the ‘show-home’ tableaux in the early pages of each catalogue; the image of Conran’s sitting room in *The House Book*, for instance) to a more ‘dispersed’ orchestration (the basement kitchen ‘market’ in the shops; the representation of tableware and children’s bedrooms in the catalogue; the over-stuffed kitchens in *The House Book*). In terms of eclecticism and lifestyle ‘condensed orchestrations’ figured the juxtapositions of charismatic objects such as a Chesterfield settee beside a Bauhaus chair: it is an expensive look and it trades in classic designs. This was the side of the Habitat taste formation that the Conran shops were dedicated to. But it is the ‘dispersed’ version of the genre that could be seen as having the most cultural influence: this might include a stripped pine kitchen table, mismatched chairs, and pasta jars. The dispersed version doesn’t necessarily require examples of high-design (an old wooden school chair juxtaposed with a large wicker basket will get something of the look), nor does it always require buying your merchandise from Habitat stores.

In this regard all three scenographic platforms offered pedagogic opportunities. In the shops (whether you came in for a cheap wooden spoon, or to put a down-payment on Chesterfield settee), you learnt about the ambience of modern jazz percolated through the smells of Mediterranean herbs. You learnt the scenography of Habitat through your feet as you moved across natural fibre flooring; you experienced the genre through whitewashed brickwork. In the catalogues you began to recognise what sort of *bric-à-brac* fitted the genre (bird cages, for instance, or wooden letterpress blocks).⁵⁵ You learnt about lighting and how to cook. In *The House Book* you learnt the complete art of ‘gentrification’: an art that could facilitate a relatively impoverished social worker in London’s Stoke Newington, or someone with much larger and expensive aspirations. Depending on your wealth, your commitments and your taste the genre could be inhabited in a way where everything cost a great deal of money and showed your exemplary knowledge of the taste formation. But it could be done ‘on the cheap’ as part of your commitments to informality, to ‘natural’ materials, and to a highly mediated

‘Mediterranean sociability’. And between these extremes were an endless range of positions to take. For traditional critical sociologists this range would matter enormously: the moneyed couples that shopped in the Conran shop in the late 1970s might achieve a display of cultural capital that no over-worked, state school educated, social worker could hope to match. I want to make a plea for the importance of the continuum of this genre, the shared affective promise that animates the continuum. It is the extent of this continuum that is historically important, and its broad invitation is what made it such a crucial symptom for the changing and expanding middle-classes of the 1970s and 80s. It offered an affective promise that is still evident today, and it is evident in the ‘dispersed form’ of the genre. When you next sit in a café, sitting on a Chesterfield settee, surrounded by a bare brick wall, where the space is illuminated by old industrial lights, in a room where the seating range from wooden church pews to old metal office chairs and where the tables have all passed through a salvage yard, it might be worth reminding yourself of Habitat as a genre, and thinking about the labour of mediation.

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¹ C. Buckley, *Designing Modern Britain*, Reaktion, London, 2007, p. 177

² P. Sparke, ‘At Home with Modernity: the New Domestic Scene’, in *British Design from 1948: Innovation in the Modern Age*, C. Breward & G. Wood (eds), V&A Publishing, London, 2012, p. 131.

³ The parenthetical quotations are from the 1977 Habitat catalogue, p. 21. While Breuer had been a student at the Bauhaus, by the time he made the Wassily chair he was a member of faculty along with Kandinsky.

⁴ The colonisation of everyday life by the commodity form is Henri Lefebvre’s central preoccupation in his three volume critique of everyday, but it is most insistently explored in the second volume, which was published in France in 1962, roughly at the same time that Habitat was being conceived: H. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life (Volume II): Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, translated by J. Moore, Verso, London, 2002.

⁵ Scenography is another name for theatrical set design and as such incorporates many of the same design activities as shop dressing and catalogue tableaux design. Wider understandings of scenography abound: for instance, Michael Levine defines it as ‘a physical manifestation of imaginary space’ (cited in P. Howard, *What is Scenography?* Routledge, London, 2009, p. xv). Today scenography, as a professional activity, is thought of as a kinaesthetic contribution to performance, and understood as ‘the manipulation and orchestration of the performance environment’, J. McKinney and P. Butterworth, *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, p.4. The link between theatre and interior design has been a central motif for interior designers, see P. Sparke, *The Modern Interior*, Reaktion, London, 2008, particularly chapter 4.

⁶ G. Lees-Maffei, ‘The Production-Consumption-Mediation Paradigm’, *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2009), pp. 351-376.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354 and p. 372.

⁸ ‘Family resemblance’ and ‘family likeness’ are the terms that Ludwig Wittgenstein uses to denote categories such as ‘games’ where there isn’t a shared taxonomical feature: ‘if you look at them [games] you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that’. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1976, p. 31.

⁹ The flexibility of 'Noir' as genre could be recognised by comparing, for instance, the film *Double Indemnity* (dir. Billy Wilder, 1944) with the various 'noirs' of the present day including so-called Nordic Noir television serials as well as a 'black' comedy like *Fargo* (dir. Joel Coen, 1996) and its spin-off TV serials.

¹⁰ See for instance E. E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival*, Reaktion, London, 2006.

¹¹ 'Every text *participates* in one or several genres, there is no genreless text, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging', Derrida cited in J. Frow, *Genre*, Routledge, London, 2006, p. 25. Frow's book offers an excellent account of how genres operate.

¹² Williams first develops this approach in R. Williams and M. Orrom, *Preface to Film*, Film Drama Limited, London, 1954.

¹³ I have pursued this aspect of Habitat in x. xxx, 'Feeling It: Habitat, Taste and the New Middle Class in 1970s Britain', *New Formations*, issue 88 (2016), pp. 105-122.

¹⁴ In, for example, the 1975 Habitat catalogue we see a man reading *The House Book* on page 104, then on 108 there is a page dedicated to promoting the book with lots of reviews, six double page spreads from the book. We are also told that there is a special 'Habitat edition' of the book (which means that you could buy it through Habitat at a special price).

¹⁵ L. Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham NC and London, 2008, p. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ A. Donaldson, 'Back to Nature in Home Equipment', Habitat press clipping, source not given and un-paginated, May 1964 – AAD/1995/12/15/1.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ B. Phillips, *Conran and the Habitat Story*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1984, p. 31.

²⁰ Explicit instructions for layout of items were provided in the *Handling Manual* (AAD/1995/12/8/1), which was provided for each store and which had photographs of how each item should be displayed. 'Dump display' is a phrase used in the manual to describe displays that emphasised the superabundance of a particular item. 'Dump displays' were often used for iconic items such as the 'chicken brick'.

²¹ A. Barrie, 'Terence Conran: Young Man Leading a Furniture Revolution', in *House Beautiful*, December, 1964, pp. 57-8.

²² *Observer* October 1966, unpaginated, AAD/1995/12/15/1. For a useful approach to 'atmosphere' as a way of understanding aesthetics as a material and everyday practice see G. Böhme, 'Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics', *Thesis Eleven*, No. 36 (1993), pp. 113-126.

²³ Phillips, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁴ For an excellent scenographic analysis of IKEA see T. Hartman, 'On the Ikeaization of France', *Public Culture*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2007), pp. 483-498.

²⁵ *Financial Times* May 23, 1968 (press clipping un-paginated) AAD/1995/12/15/1.

²⁶ Barry Curtis, 'A New Domestic Landscape: British Interior Design, 1960-73', in *The Sixties: Britain and France, 1960-1973, The Utopian Years*, edited by David Alan Mellor and Laurent Gervereau, London: Philip Wilson, 1997, p. 190.

²⁷ Wickham quoted in N. Ind, *Terence Conran: The Authorised Biography*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1995, p. 80.

²⁸ For classic histories of department stores see M. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1981, and R. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1982.

²⁹ The confluence between museums, galleries, exhibitions and department stores is explored in M. Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 2006, pp. 29-36.

³⁰ 'Counterpoint', *The Times*, February 16, 1973, p. 20.

³¹ S. Bayley, 'A Look Back at the Bauhaus', *Habitat 1981/2 Catalogue*, p. 15.

³² Habitat 1964 folded catalogue AAD/1995/12/5/1.

³³ E. Good, 'What the smart chicks are buying', *The Sunday Times*, May 10, 1964 (un-paginated) AAD/1995/12/15/1.

³⁴ R. Carr, 'The Marks and Sparks of Instant Furniture?' *The Guardian*, 3 December, 1970 (un-paginated) AAD/1995/12/15/1. Marks and Sparks is a vernacular version of the shop Marks and Spencer. Terence Conran was imagining Habitat as 'the Sainsbury of the furniture trade' by mid-1970: N. Ind, *Terence Conran: The Authorised Biography*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1995, p. 177. A full history of Habitat would need to be alert to the way it vacillated (constantly) between 'boutique' status and 'mass market' status.

³⁵ Habitat (Habitat Retail Ltd) now (in 2016) exists within the UK as part of the Home Retail Group and consists of just three London stores and a number of 'mini Habitats' situated within Homebase stores. Habitat exists within 'mainland' Europe as part of Cafom.

³⁶ Habitat Press Release, February 1972, AAD/1995/12/16/143-176.

³⁷ From the soundtrack to *Insight: Terence Conran* (1981).

³⁸ A 'Reality effect', for Roland Barthes (who is primarily concerned with literature), is information superfluous to narrative which 'constitute some index of character or atmosphere' (R. Barthes, 'The Reality Effect' [1968], *The Rustle of Language*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 141). In the scenography of the Habitat catalogue they are superfluous to the itemising and promotion of commodities, they do however substantiate a mood, an atmosphere.

³⁹ For instance, it was followed by *The Kitchen Book* in 1977, and led to the emergence of Conran Octopus Publishing.

⁴⁰ *Habitat 1975 Catalogue*, p. 108.

⁴¹ T. Conran, *The House Book*, Mitchell Beazley, London, 1974, p. 21.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 11.

⁴³ In the journalism surrounding Habitat the name Terence Conran is often seen as synonymous with the firm. The association of Habitat with the name Conran was at times encouraged by the firm who in their publicity often used the image of Conran the designer as a micro-manager and gatekeeper of quality. It isn't surprising that journalists write about Habitat as if the shop was coextensive with Conrans other activities.

⁴⁴ An account of gentrification in London that is particularly relevant to the history of Habitat is provided in J. Moran, 'Early Cultures of Gentrification in London, 1955-1980', *Journal of Urban History*, 34, 1, pp. 101-121.

⁴⁵ M. Duckett, 'Conran's Own Habitat', *Telegraph Colour Magazine*, February 2, 1968, p. 29

⁴⁶ See C. Wouters, *Informalization: Manners and Emotions Since 1890*, London: Sage, 2007 for a dialectical history of how ‘informalization’ has affected social life. Wouters rightly sees the general loosening of social rules alongside an emphasis on new forms of self-constraint and self-management.

⁴⁷ Conran, Op cit. p. 219.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 187.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ For a useful review of design history in relation to mediation see: G. Lees-Maffei, ‘The Production-Consumption-Mediation Paradigm’, *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2009), pp. 351-376. Lees-Maffei also discusses mediation throughout *Design at Home: Domestic Advice Books in Britain and the USA since 1945*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2014.

⁵¹ A. Hennion, *The Passion for Music: A Sociology of Mediation*, translated by Margaret Rigaud and Peter Collier, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. Originally published in France in 1993.

⁵² B. Hulanicki, *From A to BIBA: The Autobiography of Barbara Hulanicki*, V&A Publishing, London, 1983, pp. 80-1.

⁵³ In this light it is worth comparing the final chapters of P. Horn, *Behind the Counter: Shop Lives from Market Stall to Supermarket*, Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 2006 and P. Cox and A. Hobley, *Shopgirls: The True Story of Life Behind the Counter*, Hutchinson, London, 2014.

⁵⁴ See J. Glancey, *A Very British Revolution: 150 Years of John Lewis*, Laurence King Publishing, 2014.

⁵⁵ In 1974 Jonathan Raban reported that a shop in his neighbourhood in London sold nothing but ‘white-painted Moroccan birdcages’: J. Raban, *Soft City*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1974, p. 102. This is part of the enlarged Habitat taste formation.